

Montgomery Place - Swiss Cottage
Annandale Road
Barrytown Vicinity
Dutchess County
New York

HABS No. NY-5625-B

HABS
NY,
14-BARTON
3B-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NY-5625 B

MONTGOMERY PLACE - SWISS COTTAGE

Location: River Road, Annandale Vicinity,
Dutchess County, New York

Present Owner: Montgomery Place Orchards, Inc.

Present Use: Tenant cottage

Significance: The Swiss Cottage is a rare example of a much published but rarely built Swiss style that was a part of the 19th century vogue for the picturesque in architecture. Designed by the influential romantic architect, Alexander Jackson Davis (1803-1892), the Swiss Cottage was built as a tenant "Factory Lodge" for the workers on the "Montgomery Place" estate. Despite its functional nature, the cottage gracefully fulfills all the stylistic characteristic that made up this exotic style.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1867. A.J. Davis's architectural practice is well documented in his Day Book, Vol. II at Avery Library, Day Book, Vol. I at the New York Public Library, and his Journal and Pocket Diaries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Entries for the design of the Swiss Cottage for Mrs. Barton appear in Day Book, Vol. II pp. 264, 266; Pocket Diary 1867, and Journal p. 181. An itemized bill also exists in the New York Public Library, Davis Collection, Box 1, Accounts and Legal papers 1843-1870.

2. Architect: Alexander Jackson Davis

3. Original and subsequent owners:

1829 Book H
Page 177
Surrogate's Court, Dutchess County

Janet Montgomery
to
Edward Livingston

1836 Book J
Page 313
Surrogate's Court, Dutchess County

Edward Livingston
to
Louise Livingston

1853 Book U
Page 501
Surrogate's Court, Dutchess County

Louise Livingston
to
Cora L. Barton

1860 Liber 116 of Deeds
Page 512
Recorded 16 May 1860

Joseph & Elizabeth Spurr
to
Thomas Barton
(Purchase of property on which
the Swiss, North, and Spurr
cottages now exist.)
for \$7,000.00

1873 Book 2
Page 237
Surrogate's Court, Dutchess County

Cora L. Barton
to
Maturin L. Delafield

1917 Liber 400 of Deeds
Page 304
Recorded 23 November 1917

Julia, Maturin L. Delafield, Jr. et al
to
John Ross Delafield

5625

1936 Liber 500
page 50
recorded 3 February 1936

John R. Delafield and wife, Violetta
to
Montgomery Place Orchards, Inc.

for \$100.00 (\$30.00 tax stamp)

All that part of Montgomery Place, my farm, at Barrytown, in the Town of Red Hook, County of Dutchess, N.Y., that lies easterly of the following line.

Beginning at a point on the West side of the former bed of Saw Kill at an angle in the Grounds of Montgomery Place, being the south end of course reading south 58° W 158 feet as shown on a map thereof by B.H. Brevoort; dated September 1918, and filed in the Office of Clerk of Dutchess County on 23 January 1936 and there numbered 1706 and running thence per magnetic meridian of Dec. 1935 along a new division line south $76^{\circ} 35'$ West 124 feet to the center of a hickory tree; thence along the easterly side of the Pine Grove S $53^{\circ} 58'$ W 237.8 feet and S $53^{\circ} 52'$ W 330.4 feet to a point on the east side of a large poplar tree; thence along the westerly line of the old race course field and after crossing the drive to the Mansion House along the westerly line of the orchard called "Old Orchard" S $39^{\circ} 07'$ W 1338.9 feet to a stake at the edge of the woods; thence due S 1047 feet to the south bounds of Montgomery Place at a point 1113 feet west from the center line of the highway and 175.8 feet W from the beginning of course N $71^{\circ} 55'$ W, shown on said map.

4. Builder: "Peter A. Harris, carpenter", appears on two of the drawings of the Swiss Cottage. He was the carpenter for Montgomery Place in the mid 1800s and was responsible for the majority of the out-buildings and the additions to the mansion from this period.
5. Original plans and construction of building: The Swiss Cottage was built as a "Factory Lodge" for the workers on the estate. It is also referred to by Davis as the "double-Swiss house" but its floor plans allow for subdivisions beyond two families.

Despite its functional nature, the Swiss Cottage gracefully fulfills all the stylistic characteristics of a "true swiss cottage" as set forth by A.J. Downing, the tastemaker of the time. It has a low spreading character, predominant broad roof, open galleries or balconies.

The true Swiss Cottage is always of wood and often shows a great deal of ornamental work in the brackets which support the roof, as well as the borders to the doors, windows, etc.
Page 152, The Architecture of Country Houses
Andrew Jackson Downing.

Equally important in the design was the Cottage's placement in the landscape. Appropriately, the Swiss house was set into a hill overlooking a stream and waterfall.

The six drawings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the pencil sketch at Avery Library, and the various entries in his Day Books, etc. give a good indication of the original plans. Davis made over seventeen drawings, numerous revisions and written specifications for the Swiss Cottage. The renderings that survive are slightly different versions of the final design. When they are compared with the existing buildings, the refinements of design and practical changes that were made for the final version become evident.

There seems to have been four design stages. The earliest version is the "Road Front No. 6" which shows double chimneys connected by a roof balustrade and four floors (including the basement). Davis's entries indicate that his first revisions on February 5th "reduced the Swiss house". The pencil sketch at Avery shows this same version with three floors. On February 28th, he made six more drawings of revisions and detail which resulted in the third version which has a slightly different roof line, including only a large central chimney.

The window groupings, roof brackets, second floor balustrade and flanking stairs carry through from the first designs. On March 19-20 Davis made "new plans for Swiss Cottage". These were the plans that were built because he notes that Mrs. Barton picked up the plans the next day.

The Swiss house is still an accurate reflection of the final design. The window groupings and door placements on the East elevation are much more sophisticated than the earlier designs. In order to facilitate easy movement in a house with numerous tenants Davis included six doors instead of the two shown on all of his other designs. However, the addition of doors does not interfere with the continuity of the elevation since they appear as windows. They contain eight panes to correspond to the 4 x 4 windows and the balcony of the second floor hides the lower door panel to further re-enforce the illusion.

It is interesting that the windows are not diamond paned, which would be very suitable to the design, yet appear in all his other drawings. This revision could be the result of intervention by Mrs. Barton, who liked to take an active part in Mr. Davis' designs and kept a close eye on all building on the property. It is likely that she advocated this change to keep down costs and Mr. Davis's imagination.

The balcony on the third floor was an addition that does not show on any earlier rendering and was probably an aesthetic decision.

There are four chimneys. This increase from the earlier versions was probably a practical decision to accomodate numerous tenants.

The board and batten on this East elevation is carried down almost to grade with only a small portion of the stone foundation showing. The other versions all show a stone basement. Whether this was done for facility in building or aesthetics, it works well.

The lovely brackets on the eaves were done by Davis as a sort of last minute addition.

His books show, "June 20 - Letter to C.L. Barton with sketch of brackets."

The floor plans at the Metropolitan show the house's overall dimensions as 49.6' x 33.6'. The house is actually longer and narrower (57.3' x 28.2') which further emphasizes the spreading low effect. The existing plan also provides for more room divisions.

There is only one drawing of the South Elevation. It shows a shed (5 x 10) on the West side of the house which was probably a privy because a pit shows on the basement plan. It was not built on that spot but there are numerous free-standing sheds near the cottage which might have substituted. The most dramatic difference between the drawing and the present elevation is the addition of a dummy gable window which breaks the eaves line. This adds enormously to the picturesque character of this facade and was probably done because this elevation was highly visible from the road. It is not duplicated on the North side.

The device of a dummy window is also used on the center-most window on the second floor of the East elevation. This and other visual tricks illustrate Davis's concern for the integrity and continuity of this exotic design while coping with the complex problem of creating a multiple dwelling. His solution is both delightful and liveable.

6. Alterations and additions: Although none of the Davis drawings of the cottage show a continuous balcony or gallery around the second level, there is physical evidence that one existed. There are openings that have been covered by metal plates along the line of the existing bracket supports, indicating that brackets were removed and that a continuous gallery surrounded the second floor on three sides (the fourth being grade level). Mid-century style books frequently show this "swiss style" with a characteristic continuous gallery. Davis's other designs in this style, as they appear in Downing and elsewhere, often show this feature.

The third floor balcony is original and the detailing exactly matches that of the balustrade shown in "East Front No. 4" at the Metropolitan Museum. It is logical to assume that originally the second floor balcony would have been the same design before it was rebuilt.

Other changes were made due to the balcony alterations. A door on the South Elevation which once opened onto the gallery, has been converted to a window. It is also probable that the stairs on either side of the cottage were rebuilt. All the drawings through the various design stages gave greater emphasis to the stairs as a part of the design. The old plans show them as 4 feet wide while the stairs are only 2 1/2 feet. The railings would also have been more decorative, matching the third floor balustrade.

[For the rest of Part I Section B. Physical History, Part II Sources of Information, and Part III Project Information see: MONTGOMERY PLACE MANSION HABS No. NY-5652.]